

## Fettered, Yet Free.

BY  
DARRETT SYLVESTER.AUTHOR OF "CLOUDS AND SMOKING," "THE  
KELLY'S ERROR," ETC.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT WILL SHE DISCOVER?

Three months later, Sibyl Elton sat alone over the fire in her quiet lodgings in Jersey. She had wandered about the Continent ever since Christmas, and was getting weary of perpetual motion, but was fearful to remain long in any place lest Geoffrey should track her and renew his terrible temptation. Now, in this out-of-the-way spot she felt safer, and, pleased with the beauty of St. Clement's bay, she had taken rooms for herself and Cecil in a cottage there, intending to remain for a few weeks. After a long hesitation, she had yielded to the incessant yearning for news of Geoffrey, and had written to Lady Temple:

"DEAR LADY TEMPLE: You have learned long before this of the misery that has fallen upon me, and know all from Geoffrey. He will have told you why I went away so suddenly, without even wishing you good-bye after all your great kindness. I could not help myself. He left me no other course. But I have longed so terribly to hear how he bears it. Will you be the kind friend you have always been and tell me? Please do not let him know you have heard from me. He had better never hear my name again. I should like very much to know how you and your husband and children are. I still retain my old name, and my address in Clematis Cottage, St. Clement's, Jersey. I can never thank you sufficiently for your great kindness to me and mine; it will remain a bright spot forever in my dark life.

"Always yours gratefully and affectionately,  
SIBYL ELTON."

In her lap, as she sat by the fire, lay the answer, received that morning. She had just read it through for the twentieth time, and the tears were stealing slowly down her pale cheeks, while her lips twitched with pain:

"DEAR MRS. ELTON: It was a great pleasure and relief to me to hear of you again, and you may rely upon me never to tell anybody but my husband—from whom I have no secrets—if you will write to me now and again. I heard everything from Mr. Chetwynd, and admired your brave conduct more than I can tell you. He was very ill with brain fever after you went—so near death as could be and yet live. We brought him here and nursed him through it, but I hope I may never pass such another Christmas! As soon as he was strong enough to leave he left us, saying that he should never rest until he found you, and we have had two or three letters from him from different parts of the Continent. I hope you will not mind, for he still persists in saying that you are absolutely free from your husband, who is dead to all intents and purposes, and that he will give you no peace till you become his wife. I think his mind has hardly yet recovered from the cruel shock. We are all well, I am thankful to say, and my husband sends me in kindest regards. Harry misses Cecil very much. Ever your true friend,  
"ADELARD TEMPLE."

Sibyl, as she read it, almost regretted that she had written the pain of knowing that he was still fighting against fate was so great.

"I do not know what will happen if he finds me," she murmured, dashing away the tears with her hand. "I do not feel as if I had strength to fight it out again. Poor Geoffrey! How I wish we had never met!"

She started violently as a knock came at the door, and her landlady, Mrs. Legros, entered. The good woman's face was troubled and her manner hurried and nervous.

"I beg your pardon, mum, I'm sure," she began, "for disturbing you, but I'm just at my wife's end. The gentleman in the drawing-room floor, mum, is so dreadful ill. He's getting worse every mortal hour, and it's my belief he won't last till morning. I must go for the doctor at once, for Sarah have gone to bed with toothache, and it's raining and blowing fit to knock you down, and it'd be downright cruel to send the girl out. I came to ask if you'd be so kind as to sit with the poor gentleman while I'm out. He ain't fit to be left."

"Certainly, Mrs. Legros," answered Sibyl, rising; and she added, quickly: "Of course you would tell me if it were anything catching, for the sake of my boy?"

"Bless you, mum, do you think I would send you there if I didn't know as it weren't catching? It's inflammation of the lungs he's got—nothing more nor less—and he's been a hard drinker, or I'm much mistaken, and ain't got no strength to throw it off. He's off his head now, poor fellow, and his friends ought to know; but I don't know where to send, nor nothing about him. He's only been here a fortnight."

"Poor fellow, how dreadful!" exclaimed Sibyl. "I shall be glad to help you; but perhaps you had better ask the doctor to send a professional nurse if he is very ill. I know very little about nursing."

"Ah, but I do!" replied the woman. "I was a professional myself till I broke my arm through slipping upon a bit of orange peel three winters ago, and it's never been strong enough since lifting. I can manage well enough while he lasts. But I'd be greatly obliged if you would sit with him now for half an hour."

She gave Sibyl directions about his medicine and hurried off, and Sibyl slowly ascended the stairs to the sick man's room. The door stood ajar, and she heard his quick, hard breathing and low mutterings as she stood outside, summoning courage to enter. It seemed to her that the voice was familiar, but she could not recall where she had heard it. With a slow, quiet step she entered the room and, unnoticed by the invalid, seated herself by the fire. He was muttering to himself, broken sentences coming in gasps between the loud, hard breathing, and she heard him take and offer bets, discuss women and cards, and swear at his fate, his innuendoes, and everything else, till she shuddered.

She looked at the thin hand, the wasted frame and drawn features, and read in all the sad story of a mispent life. It was a handsome face, and she knew she had seen it somewhere, but could not recall where. He was a man of about forty, but his hair was silvery-gray already. Presently he turned and looked at her.

"Is that you, Mary?" he said hoarsely.

"Come here and put your hand on my forehead. It burns like fire, and this helmet is so heavy I can hardly bear it. I shall leave the regiment—I think the uniform is such an infernal nuisance. Ah, that is better."

As Sibyl moved to rise, she saw that she had a cool hand and a warm heart, my poor girl! I've been dreaming of this terrible dream, dear one. They told me you were dead, and you and your baby—burnt to death in that awful fire at Moore's hotel—and it

seemed to stir up my heart forever. I went to the bed then, Mary, as I should if I lost you, and took up with that Jack Lawrell who had such a horror of. Ah, you start! Well, he was a rare scamp. No, not all had—only given to drinking like a fish. Steady, Jack, my boy, you're drunk already—you'll have another fit of d.t. Ah, hold him—stop him! By Heaven, he's gone! Mary, are you there? Why do you take away your hand?"

She was trembling from head to foot. She knew him now—he was Richard Lenny, the man who had, according to his own account, been present at the death of John or Frank Lawrell, and was consequently a party to the cruel trick that had been played upon her.

"But it was false!" she exclaimed quickly. "It was Frank and not Jack who killed himself."

With a glimmering of consciousness, he turned and looked at her.

"Who are you?" he asked abruptly, and then, without waiting for an answer, he murmured: "Frank? Oh, no! Frank was a man—never liked the fellow. Takes care, Jack, he'll do you a mischief yet. Don't trust him. Not like my brother Frank. He's a real good sort—rather ashamed of me, I take it. Poor Frank! Ah, it was Mary's death that knocked me over—and the baby—both gone! Who cares what I am or what I do? Oh, my head!"

He spoke in short, gasping sentences, and she listened eagerly, but he had wandered off to races again, and by the time Mrs. Legros returned with the doctor he was in a feverish doze. The latter shook his head as he looked at him.

"He is a great deal better, and may sink rapidly," he said gravely; "you had better send for his friends. Do you know anything of him?"

Mrs. Legros shook her head, but Sibyl said quickly:

"Yes, I used to know him years ago. I don't think he has any near relatives except a brother. I will write or telegraph to him."

"Telegraph the first thing in the morning, if he lives so long. Is he here alone?"

He looked inquiringly at Sibyl, and something in his manner made her color angrily.

"I really cannot tell," she said coldly.

"I was not aware he was in the house till Mrs. Legros requested me to sit with him while she went for you. Then I recognized him as an old friend of my husband's. I do not even know by what name he is going—probably it is not his own."

Lenny, put in Mrs. Legros, looking uneasy; and he seemed quite the gentleman.

"So he is," said Sibyl; "that is, he was born a gentleman, and that is his real name. He has been a very wild man, and an intemperate one, but I have never heard of his being a cheat."

"He is paying the penalty now," remarked Doctor Godfrey. "Will you help Mrs. Legros to nurse him, or shall I send somebody?"

Mrs. Elton hesitated, and he watched her with some curiosity. He was a young man, of not more than thirty, unmarried, and he certainly hoped that this lovely young widow would assist him in the care of the invalid.

"Yes, I will help to nurse him," she said, at length, as the thought flashed through her mind that he might tell her all those news about her husband. "I do not know much about it, but I will do my best."

"I think you will make a very good nurse," remarked Doctor Godfrey, smiling, especially under Mrs. Legros's tuition. She is a first-rate one."

"Pretty fair, sir, thank you. And I'm sure I'm obliged to Mrs. Elton. She's quick in voice and soft in moving, and that's better than your bustling ones. Poor gentleman! he's waking now."

Doctor Godfrey went toward the bed, and Sibyl stole away to change her evening dress for a dressing gown.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PLOT Laid Bare.

Through that night and the following day Richard Lenny fought hard for his life, and Sibyl, becoming interested in her work, watched him with breathless eagerness. If he had been her dearest friend on earth, her watchfulness and care could not have been greater or more incessant. Doctor Godfrey, looking on, began to doubt her assertion of his being almost a stranger to her.

She had telegraphed, as desired, to his brother, who she remembered, by the merest chance, was a lawyer with offices in Lincoln's Inn Fields—for her husband had once employed him, and she had gone with him to the office—and he had answered that he would be there on the following evening. She remembered him perfectly—fair, tall, and good-looking, with a frank, pleasant manner and voice—an improvement on his brother's. She remembered that her husband had said he was "a different sort of fellow from Jack, steady as old Time, and sure to get on in the world," and she wondered if he would recognize her. She hoped not, and, careless, almost ignorant of her extreme beauty, which made it difficult for men to forget her when once they had seen her, thought it very unlikely that he would do so.

The sick man had fallen now into a quieter sleep than he had had all day, and she had just taken her place once more in the darkened room while Mrs. Legros went to her room, when a quick tap came at the door, and Frank Lenny entered the room. She held up her hand warningly, and he stole across the room on tip-toe.

He started as she came nearer, and held out his hand.

"Is your husband with you? Ah, forgive me—I forgot!" and he glanced at her black dress—she still wore black, feeling disinclined for colors now. "How is poor Dick?" he asked before she could speak, "and how is it you are nursing him?"

"He is very, very ill. It is by the merest chance I am here. I happened to be lodging in the house, and the landlady asked me to help her in the nursing. I am glad you have come, but—will you call me Mrs. Elton, please? I do not bear my husband's name now. We separated some years ago, and since then I have always called myself Mrs. Elton."

"I will try to remember. I am not surprised," and he looked grave. "I have heard a good deal of him from Dick, and sometimes wondered he never mentioned you."

"I have not seen your brother for a number of years till last night. I am afraid the doctor thinks very badly of him. Have you come alone?"

"Yes, there is nobody else to come. Our only sister is married, and out in India now; Dick and I are the last of the family."

"You are not married then?" she said, with some hesitation.

"No, I have never seen a sufficiently perfect woman to suit my exacting taste. Poor Richard lost his wife and child in a fire at a hotel where they were staying in town. He was out when the fire started, and when he returned the hotel was burnt to the ground, and they perished in it. I think the shock turned his brain for a time; but he took to drinking and fast living, and he

soon a ruined man ever since. He would never have been what he is now if Mary had lived. She was one of the best of women."

"How very sad!" said Sibyl, her eyes filling. "He keeps calling me Mary, and he does anything I ask him."

"You are a little like her," remarked Frank Lenny. "She was a beautiful girl. I am glad the poor fellow has such an insatiable happiness."

It was not meant as a compliment, and Sibyl took it quietly. It mattered nothing to her now whether she was handsome or plain.

Doctor Godfrey came in at that moment, and looked inquiringly at the new comer. Sibyl explained.

"I am glad you have come," he said shortly. "It is a critical matter just now. If he lives through the next three hours, he may rally, and he will have Mrs. Elton to thank as much as anybody for his life. She could not have nursed her dearest friend more carefully."

"And he almost my dearest foe," she thought bitterly; and then she left the room and went to look for Cecil. Doctor Godfrey tapped at her door as he passed, and entered at her invitation.

"There is a slight change for the better," he said; "but it is a critical matter just now. If he lives through the next three hours, he may rally, and he will have Mrs. Elton to thank as much as anybody for his life. She could not have nursed her dearest friend more carefully."

"What ever it is, your presence has a soothing effect, and it will be kind of you to remain with him for the next few hours. But you may as well warn his brother that even if he lives through this attack he can never recover. He will only linger on a few weeks or perhaps months. His whole frame is wrecked by intemperance."

He watched her closely as he made the announcement, and she looked him steadily in the face.

"I am afraid, from all I hear, his death will not be a great source of grief to anybody," she answered carelessly. "But of course we must do our best to prolong his life, therefore I will do as you wish."

"Thank you," he said more pleasantly. "I wish I could do a few more such good deeds as this by the way. Good evening. I shall be here the first thing in the morning."

She bowed in silence, and he left the room. So once more she watched through the night, and listened to the quick, rattling breath, changed the poultices, and administered his medicine, while Frank Lenny watched her with all a man's admiration of her gentle movements and quiet skill.

She was one of those women to whom nursing came by nature, and little Cecil had given her some practice since his accident. And again Doctor Godfrey said that there was a decided improvement and a good chance of a temporary recovery. At times, the sick man would return, but only in a drowsy fashion that made him express no surprise at seeing either his brother or Mrs. Elton. It was not till the evening of the following day that he asked how they came there—for now his progress toward recovery became steady, and every hour his breathing became easier and his strength greater. But when Sibyl spoke of relinquishing her task he was so distressed, and implored her so piteously not to hand him over to "the tender mercies of the old woman," that she had no choice left. She was, however, as day after day she nursed him with all the care and attention of a sister, whether he had any twinge of compunction about the deception to which he had lent himself, and which might have been the cause of such shame and misery to her. And, as the memory returned to her of that terrible evening when her husband had appeared, and it was, from the dead, to her, she turned from him with a sense of hate and loathing that it was almost impossible to conquer or conceal.

His brother Frank she liked more and more every day they were together. It was as a gleam of sunshine when his bright face appeared at the door of the sick room with his usual question: "Is he asleep? May I come in?" He took Cecil for walks, bought him toys, and taught him games, till the child grew so fond of him that the mother was jealous for the memory of Geoffrey. And yet, as she asked herself, was it not better so, when the one object of her life was to prevent his ever meeting Geoffrey again?

Poor Sibyl! It seemed to her at times as if the yearning for the glance of the loving dark eyes, the sound of the dear voice, was almost more than she could bear. She told herself that it would not last—that, knowing they were parted forever, her love must die by degrees. But the weeks and months had brought no change as yet, unless to strengthen and increase her misery and yearning.

She was sitting by Mr. Lenny one evening, ten days after the night Mrs. Legros had called her in, busily stitching at some work for Cecil, her thoughts back to the happy days at Sanden's, when she had been unconscious of her own feelings or Geoffrey's, while the invalid, propped up by pillows, dreamily watched her quick fingers.

"Godfrey thinks I may get on to the sofa to-morrow," he said presently, "and tell me I have only you to thank for it. I don't know how to thank you though, Mrs. Elton. What shall I say?"

"Nothing. I do not like being thanked, especially when I have been acting only as your nurse."

Mrs. Legros, however, said she was quite cross with her because you have shown her so plainly that you prefer my nursing to hers."

"How could I help it?" he asked, with a faint smile. "You can hardly realize the pleasure it has afforded me to have the gentle care of a lady again after all these long years. As Frank says, it is a pleasure to see you move about the room. How do you like Frank, Mrs. Elton?"

"Very much," she answered warmly; and then there was silence for some minutes.

"I have been dreaming such a happy dream as I lay here," he said at last, with a slight hesitation in his manner. "Can you guess what it is?"

"I am not a good guesser," she replied, shaking her head with a slight smile. "Tell me your dream."

"Well, don't be angry if you don't like it, but Frank is such a good fellow—so different from me—that I thought you might learn to think something of him, and it is plain enough he is falling head over ears in love with you."

Sibyl laid her work down in her lap, and a crimson flush on her face and her eyes glittering with anger.

"Mr. Lenny, how dare you say such a thing to me?" she said, in a voice he hardly recognized. "Is this your gratitude for what I have done for you, to attempt to play such a cruel trick upon me? I know as well as you do that my husband is still alive, and you have found it very hard to forgive you for lending yourself so such a cruel fraud."

She rose and turned to leave him, but he caught her dress.

"Stop, Mrs. Elton!" he cried. "You shall not go till I have learned what you mean. I swear I never knew—never guessed—that you had married again. I am no party to any fraud; I thought and hoped you were free to become my brother's wife."

She sat down again, for her limbs trembled so that she could not stand.

"I do not comprehend what you mean by married again," she said, looking him full in the face. "But you told that gentleman who came to see you—Mr. Chetwynd—that my husband, John Lawrell, had destroyed himself before your eyes, when you knew it was Frank; and had not John wanted money from me, and come to me in person last December, I should have married another man. It was a cruel trick to play, and now you are making it far, far worse."

Richard Lenny passed his hands before his eyes like a man half awake.

"Am I mad, or are you?" he asked sharply. "I have played no trick. Eldora Heaven I swear that I saw John Lawrell, your husband, jump out of a second-story window in a fit of delirium tremens, that I helped to pick up his body, that I was chief witness of his death at the inquest, and that this all happened last October! I have not seen Frank for more than a year. He committed forgery, and has been in hiding ever since. That's the whole truth. Now tell me what you mean."

In a few words she told him of her husband's visit, and his account of the whole affair.

Mrs. Lenny was silent for several minutes, and then broke into a laugh.

"I see it all now," he said quickly, "and a clever trick it is too. You saw him in the moonlight only—and he is like enough to mislead you after not having seen poor Jack for three years. It was Frank who came to me—I had told the other day, if you had not come to this house, if I had ever said anything to you about marrying again, you would probably have gone on paying him a thousand a year without ever seeing him all his life. What a neat thing it has been! Now send for him—say you have something urgent to communicate to him, and will not pay in his money—which is just due again, by the bye—unless he comes for it, and prove my words. Mrs. Elton, how thankful I am to be able to repay you for all you have done for me!"

He fell back breathless and exhausted from so long a speech, and the excitement of the discovery he had made, and Sibyl, with a true nurse's instinct, thinking of him before herself, poured out, with trembling hands, some brandy and water and gave it to him. Then, as she fully realized all he had told her, and all it meant for her—Geoffrey and happiness that a short hour ago had seemed utterly and forever beyond her reach—she fell on her knees by the bedside, and, burying her face in the bedclothes, thanked Heaven with tears of joy for such a reward for her simple act of charity. But Richard Lenny knew that his happy dream was over.

## [TO BE CONTINUED.]

One Week in Wall Street.  
October 7th, 1878, Western Union Telegraph stock sold at the New York Stock Exchange for 90 1/2 per share; October 14th, 1878, it sold at 85 1/2, a fluctuation of 9 1/2 per cent, in seven days; 12,500 shares sold on a margin of one per cent, required an actual capital of \$12,500. The same stock, delivered at 85 1/2, gave a profit of 9 1/2 per cent on the stock, or \$937.50 per 100 shares. On the whole 12,500 the actual profit was \$117,187.50, or 9 1/2 times the capital used in one week. This is a single case taken from the official record of the Stock Exchange, and shows how money is made so rapidly in stocks. Few people, however, have the necessary capital to put up in order to realize such immense profits as these, but capital in any amount from \$10 to \$50,000 can be used with equal success by the new combination system of operating in stocks which Messrs. Lawrence & Co., Bankers, of New York, have established. By this method of orders in various assets and operating them as one immense capital, shareholders realize large profits which are divided pro rata monthly. New investors receive two interesting rules for success, and full information, so that any one can operate profitably. Stocks and bonds wanted. Government bonds supplied. Apply to Lawrence & Co., Bankers, 30 Exchange Place, New York City.

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